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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6913
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 5800

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000396

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: HRW REPORT ON CITIZENSHIP WITHDRAWALS
DRAWS SHARP GOJ REACTION

REF: A. 09 AMMAN 1466
[1](#)B. 09 AMMAN 1761
[1](#)C. 09 AMMAN 1667

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) The release of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report "Stateless Again: Palestinian-Origin Jordanians Deprived of their Nationality" has elicited an angry response from the GOJ. The report highlights the personal experiences of eleven individuals who had their nationality revoked by the Ministry of Interior, typically while seeking routine administrative services, such as a driver's license or a passport renewal. The loss of status renders an individual essentially stateless. Although post is unaware of any deportations, the change in status does affect access to a variety of government services. According to HRW, 2700 Jordanians of Palestinian origin were stripped of Jordanian identity documents between 2004 and 2008.

Background

[1](#)2. (S) Citizenship rights and status for Jordanians of Palestinian origin have long been complicated and emotional topics in Jordan (refs a and c). Jordan issues Palestinians one of several different color-coded identity documents depending on when the family first came to Jordan and their area of origin in Palestine, and each of these types of ID documents allow access to different privileges and government services. (Note: A reference chart has been posted at <http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Levels of Jordanian Citizenship>. End Note.) By replacing one color ID card with another, the GOJ changes the entitlement structure for the holder. The government has previously defended this legal stratification as a means of strengthening the Palestinian right of return.

[1](#)3. (S) Many of these revocations were based upon the withdrawal or expiration of Israeli residence permits for the West Bankers who were unable to meet the GOI's standards for eligibility, and they appear directly tied to the East Bank anxieties about Jordan becoming and "alternate homeland" for Palestinians. (Note: Post does not have additional specific details for the eleven cases cited by HRW other than the information in the report. End Note.) Last summer, the GOJ at first denied that revocations were taking place, but later the Interior Minister (and now Deputy PM) Nayef al-Qadi acknowledged and defended the "corrections." Contacts have previously noted Qadi's hard-line attitude toward Palestinians and explained this policy as indicative of his determination to defend the position of East Bankers in Jordan's political structure (reftel b.)

The Government Rejects Another "Foreign Report"

14. (S) The GOJ's response was predictably swift and pointed. Minister of State for Media Affairs Nabil Sharif blasted the report for what he referred to as its "fallacies" and "unsubstantiated allegations," contending that the Interior Ministry lacks the legal authority to "withdraw" Jordanian nationality. He defended the aforementioned reclassifications as a "correction of status" resulting from the GOJ's 1988 decision to withdraw its legal and administrative claims on the West Bank. He stated these actions "had the aim of preserving Palestinian identity, and forcing the Palestinians to stick to their land with the avowed aim of derailing schemes seeking to empty Palestinian territories of their population, and therefore 'Judaizing' them."

15. (S) COMMENT. Given the sensitivity of both human rights issues and Palestinian-East Bank relations in Jordan, the GOJ's sharp response to the report is not surprising and is consistent with a recent trend of testy rejections of criticism from independent organizations or foreign governments, ranging from the International Religious Freedom (IRF) report to the recent Freedom House report.

16. (S) However, it is interesting to note that on the day the HRW report was released, PM Samir al-Rafa'i visited both the MFA and Ministry of Interior and met with governors to emphasize the need to respect the rule of law and protect the rights of citizens. Analysts wonder if this is an attempt to reduce Jordan's

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recent negative press. END COMMENT.
Beecroft